

**WILKINSBURGH BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Finance Committee Work Session Minutes**  
**January 21, 2015**

**CALL TO ORDER**

President McCarthy-Johnson called the meeting to order at approximately 6:31PM in Council Chambers, second floor of the Municipal Building, 605 Ross Avenue, Wilkinsburg, PA.

**ROLL CALL**

The roll was called to establish a quorum. Council members present were Ms. Macklin, Mr. Lefebvre – via cell phone, Ms. Garrett, Mr. Taiani – via tablet- Face Time, Ms. Trice, Vice-President Moore, Ms. Grannemann, Mr. Shattuck and President McCarthy-Johnson. Also present were Finance Director, Dave Egler, Interim Borough Manager, Amanda J. Ford and Mayor John Thompson and Solicitor Michael Witherel were absent.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, President McCarthy-Johnson requested a moment of silence for Victims of Violent Crimes.

Councilwoman Grannemann asks that Councilman Taiani use the mute button unless he is interacting with Council during the meeting.

President McCarthy-Johnson announces to the audience that the presentation by Tom Hardy, WCDC and Palo Alto Partners will be presented first before the remaining items on the agenda.

**PRESENTATION**

- Discussion to revise the Tax Abatement Program and put together a tool-kit of incentives that helps promote renovations to deteriorated buildings in the Business District.
- Tax Abatement is not a “tax exemption”; it is abatement on the value of the improvements of the building.
- Ten (10) year abatement.
- WCDC recommendation to the Borough and School District is to enhance the existing tax abatement program to offer a more valuable incentive targeted properties in the Business District.

Councilman Lefebvre informed Councilman Shattuck to have President McCarthy-Johnson to re-connect with Councilman Taiani due to lost connection.

Questions and Answers follow from the audience and Council.

(End presentation)

President McCarthy-Johnson – How soon do you need an answer from Council? I definitely feel that there needs to be a written procedure, step by step guide.

Tracey Evans – WCDC – Soon. We plan to give the same presentation to the School District.

Councilwoman Macklin – Our new Code Director should be able to facilitate this process correct?

Tracey Evans – Yes.

President McCarthy-Johnson – Thank you Tracey, et al. The presentation has been very informative, hopefully Council has asks all the questions that they wanted answers to so that they understand the procedure a lot better. Our next step would be to have a discussion to determine to pursue to the next step to adopt an ordinance and a policy procedure to follow.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

President McCarthy-Johnson – Moving forward with the meeting, no one was signed up for public comment for discussion of items on the agenda. We will later have public comment for discussion items not on the agenda.

## **FINANCE**

### *2. Municipal Service Fees – Dave Egler, Finance Director*

I provided to Council an updated MSF Analysis Sheet; on the first line under the \$50/Unit increase the dollar amount should be \$900,000. It was pointed out to me that an entry made back in 2013 that the auditors made skewed the numbers a bit. I'm trying to get the numbers as accurate as possible for you to be able to make an informed decision. A decision does not need to be made tonight. I have a meeting with the COG to go over a number of issues and the timing of the billing.

In the past I have provided this analysis, but one thing I never included was the Public Works salaries and benefits. There are three (3) employees and 80% of their time is spent on collecting recycling. Those figures are now a part of the calculations.

Under the Municipal Service Fee years ago we use to bill the entire community, including six (6) units or more. Since 2011, we now bill for five (5) units or less. Therefore, the dollar amount of income has changed accordingly.

Councilman Taiani questions the dollar amount of \$200,000.00 in delinquency collection not collected.

Dave Egler – That is one of the questions I intend to discuss with the COG, as to why the revenue is down. Fees that are unpaid are turned over to MBM for delinquent collections, which are down by \$18,000.

Councilwoman Macklin - I would like to know the total number of bills that goes out. And are the penalty and interest in these numbers as well?

Dave Egler – There are no penalty and interest in these figures.

Councilwoman Grannemann – Dave, I would like to see on the chart the potential income that is not reflected on the chart.

Dave Egler – The recycling contract expires at the end of 2015.

Councilman Taiani – When does Council need to make a decision on the MSF increase before the bills go out?

Councilwoman Macklin – February 11, 2015.

3. *Holiday Parade Receipts* – President McCarthy-Johnson – Everyone was provided a copy of the receipts from the holiday parade expenses.

(Council members reviewing information)

Dave Egler – Just a comment for Council. I spoke with the Mayor briefly and I wish that he was here tonight. Council would know more about this then I would. However, it is my understanding that the additional cost for the school buses is what off-set the budget. The School District I believe was to cover the expense for the school buses. Other than that expense, we would have fallen within the budget amount allotted.

Councilwoman Grannemann – What I would like to do is pay the entire amount. And then pay the \$401.45 out of the \$5,000 out of the Community Days budget.

Councilwoman Macklin – I second that motion.

President McCarthy-Johnson – Last year Community Days did not use their entire allotment for 2014.

Dave Egler – If that is Council's wishes, the entire bill can be paid out of the 2014 Community Days budget.

President McCarthy-Johnson – I would like caviar in place; and that in the future the expenses must be presented in advance of the event so that there is an approved budget. It is very critical that this process be followed.

Vice-President Moore – Also, the Mayor should have involved the School District in a timely manner to inform them what was to be their share of the expenses. This was a last minute, not very well planned event and now the Borough is responsible to paying the entire amount.

Councilwoman Grannemann – Question. How can we pay for this out of last year's Community Days budget? Aren't the books closed for 2014?

Dave Egler – As long as I have the financial support to show the auditors, we can pay this out of the 2014 line item budget.

Vice-President Moore – Can you repeat the motion please?

Councilwoman Grannemann – I move that we pay this expense for the holiday parade including taking \$401.45 from the 2014 remaining balance for Community Days.

Councilwoman Macklin – You mean \$901.45?

Councilman Taiani – I'm sorry this is a procedural issue. This matter was placed on the table at the last meeting. Therefore, in order for a new motion, it must be taken off the table by a majority vote. And then Kate can make her motion to be voted on.

President McCarthy-Johnson – You are absolutely correct. I need someone to take the original motion off the table.

Moved: Councilwoman Macklin                      Second: Councilwoman - Grannemann

Yes: Ms. Trice, Ms. Moore, Ms. Grannemann, Mr. Shattuck, Ms. Macklin, Mr. Lefebvre, Ms. Garrett, Mr. Taiani, President McCarthy-Johnson.

Motion carried

Motion to pay Wilkinsburg 2014 Holiday Parade expenses total amount of \$901.45 and that \$401.45 be taken from the 2014 Community Days budget.

Moved: Councilwoman Grannemann                      Second: Councilwoman Macklin

Yes: Ms. Grannemann, Mr. Shattuck, Ms. Macklin, Ms. Moore, Ms. Trice, Mr. Taiani, Ms. Garrett, Mr. Lefebvre, President McCarthy-Johnson.

Motion carried

President McCarthy-Johnson – Is there any other Public Comment before we close the meeting?

**Kate Luxemburg – 432 Rebecca Ave.** – Discussion on the Tax Abatement in conjunction with the Tax Compromise; recites the reason for the \$2,500 fee was to allow the Borough to cover the expenses for the Solicitor to prepare the petition for the Tax Compromise request. If an

individual purchases the property through Tax Abatement; they do not need to apply for the Tax Compromise. The Tax Abatement is a big deal because it goes on for ten (10) years.

President McCarthy-Johnson – We get and I completely understand the process Kate, thank you.

Another problem I see is that we bill an awful lot of vacant land for the MSF fee. TCVCOG needs to do a better job of the lot-n-block identifier on the bill. I paid for three (3) years of MSF fees on the property that I purchased that was empty for twelve (12) years.

Ms. Macklin – Just one comment please; if you three (3) occupancy permits in a building and you decide to make it a single unit. It may be difficult to go back depending on the zoning.

Kate Luxemburg – I do not want to go back. And if there is a way for me to go down to one that would be a big help. Thank you.

## **Old Business**

Mr. Shattuck - One item we need to make modification to; back in November we approved three lots consolidations for Pittsburgh Historical Landmark Foundation (PHLF). Within our SALDO they have 90 days to record that. They were just turned over to the Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County. The applicant's engineer who prepared the documents made some errors in the language related to the Redevelopment Authority, so the drawings had to be re-executed and back before the Redevelopment Authority Board. This process would expire there 90 days time period. They are requesting an extension and looking for us to reaffirm that the land development has satisfied all the requirements and that there are no changes. This extension is only to address the clerical and timing issue. Resolution No. 15-007

Ms. Garrett – I'm not sure if I need to make the motion to withdraw now, or to if we can add to the agenda at the next meeting in February. There has been lengthy discussions regarding Green Street Park; the last meeting pertaining to this subject I believe I may have voted in error "in favor" of blocking the sale of the property from the School District.

I would like to have it placed back on the agenda so that we can review to withdraw the motion.

Mr. Taiani – It's my understanding that if she wants to take action and it has not been advertised; it will require a 2/3 vote of the Council. Then it would require a majority vote at the next meeting.

Ms. Macklin – It's my understanding that Council can put forth any resolution.

President McCarthy-Johnson – This action has been filed in court as of Friday and that's a problem. We need to seek direction from the solicitor. I can call him, or we can wait until the legislative work session to discuss with him at that time.

Ms. Garrett – That's fine.

Ms. Macklin – Are you looking to reverse the decision?

President McCarthy-Johnson – Again, the problem is the petition has been filed. This action has or may break the relationships between this Council and the School Board. This Council needs to meet with the School District as soon as possible. Someone needs to meet with the School Board and have a conversation soon.

- Further discussion follows.

Ms. Moore – Let's put this discussion to rest for now.

President McCarthy-Johnson – Let me clear something. Marc sent an email to the President of the School Board and said that there was no communication. And that was absolutely incorrect.

Ms. Macklin – One more comment, please. As a council have to agree on a majority vote to do anything. So, no individual Council Member should be communicating with any organization that we are in litigation with, or have a relationship with. Usually, the contact would come from the Borough Manager; without a manager it should come from the solicitor or President of Council. No individual on this council should be acting by themselves and making any statements about what we are litigating.

President McCarthy-Johnson – Thank you for your opinion, Mr. Taiani. Are there any other questions or comments on Green Street Park? Our next step is to talk with the solicitor to determine our next steps. And I suggest that our Acting Borough Manager make contact with the School District and have conversations about Green Street Park.

## **New Business**

President McCarthy-Johnson - I sent everyone a copy of the new Talent Bank Application Form. I also included a list of potential Council Committees. I would like to go back to committee structure to eliminate all the confusion. The list that I have given you are just suggestions, this is not an official list. I would like to inform the audience of what these committees may be.

- Personnel Committee
- Hiring Committee
- Public Safety Committee - (Current)
- Budget and Finance Committee – (Current)
- Economics and Revitalization Committee – (New)
- Civil Sector and Constituent/Business Outreach – (New)
- Capital Planning/Public Works Infrastructure Municipal Services – (New)
- Joint Tax Committee
- Community Relations/Special Events –
- Authorities, Boards and Commissions – Information came from the Borough website. Information is old and needs to be updated.

President McCarthy-Johnson – Does anyone have any other new business?

- No response from council or the audience.
- Council will go into executive session and action may be necessary at the completion.
- Adjourned at 8:15 p.m. for executive session.
- Executive session ended at 9:58 p.m.; no action was taken during the session.

**Adjourned**

Being no action taken necessary, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:00 p.m.

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Vanessa McCarthy-Johnson  
President of Council